

The Effects of Social Media Marketing Antecedents on Social Media Marketing, Brand Loyalty and Purchase Intention: A Customer Perspective

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Keywords

Social media antecedents, social media marketing, brand loyalty and purchase intention

Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore the effects of the antecedents of social media marketing, brand loyalty and purchase intention. Furthermore, the study aims at investigating the effect of social media marketing on brand loyalty and purchase intention. Finally, the study seeks to identify the effect of brand loyalty on purchase intention. In order to achieve the study objectives, a questionnaire was developed based on prior literature and a sample of customers consisting of 500 participants was selected in order to collect the required data. The model of the study was developed theoretically and then tested using structural equation modeling.

The results confirmed that social media antecedents significantly affect three constructs: social media marketing, brand loyalty and customer purchase intention. In line with numerous previous studies, the results indicated that social media marketing significantly affects both brand loyalty and customer purchase intention. Finally, the findings showed that brand loyalty has a significant effect on customer purchase intention. Based on these results, it was concluded that organizations should pay more attention to the antecedents of social media marketing since it has direct effects on social media marketing application, brand loyalty and customer purchase intention. Despite the importance of these results, the study is still limited to measurements used to evaluate constructs, since these measurements were built on a small number of indicators, its cross-sectional design and a little number of antecedents being explored. Considering these limitations in the future might reveal different results. However, since the effect degree of social media marketing application is greater than the degree of the same construct on brand loyalty and purchase intention, social marketing application was not approved to play a mediating role between these constructs. Hence, the major contribution of this study is that social media antecedents are no less important than the application of social media marketing itself. In other words, for organizations to ensure an effective application of social media marketing, an eye on its antecedents would bring the benefits of social media marketing into the light, which, in turn, would affect brand loyalty and customer purchase intention.

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First submission received: 16th September 2018

Revised submission received: 1st December 2018

Accepted: 28th December 2018

Introduction

A new tool of communication was introduced in the early 2000s, which became widely known as social media. The main feature of this tool is interaction among users (Singh & RatnaSinha, 2017). Therefore, it is regarded as a tool that has the greatest influence on organizations communication with customers and the public (Parveen, 2012). In fact, one of the most important drivers for organizations to utilize social media is the large number of people who use social media applications such as Facebook (Sharif, Troshani, & Davidson, 2015). According to Zahoor and Qureshi (2017), social media refers to web technologies utilized for interaction with public communities. Tuten and Solomon (2015) stated that a new “p” was emerging and added to the marketing mix Ps’ with the introduction of social media to become the five Ps, which are product, price, promotion, place, participation or social media marketing. They

defined the fifth 'P' as an application of social media technologies to build an environment in which the intended value is created to fulfill stakeholders' requirements. Since organizations seek to build brand loyalty, one of the means that can be utilized to achieve this goal was social media (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012) due to its benefits over traditional marketing means. Examples of these benefits include increased levels of organizational performance (Alarcón, Rialp, & Rialp, 2015), brand loyalty (Tatar & Eren-Erdogmus, 2016), user consumption patterns (Thoene, 2012) and purchasing behaviors of consumers (Hayta, 2013). Consequently, the positive effect of social media marketing on constructs such as brand loyalty and purchase intention were well reported in the literature. However, relationships between the antecedents of social media marketing, social media marketing, brand loyalty and customer purchase intention had not gained great attention from researchers to be studied in the same model in local organizations. Therefore, the aim of this study is to explore effects among the antecedents of social media marketing, social media marketing, brand loyalty and customer purchase intention in order to understand the real effect of these factors when tested simultaneously in one model. The study is organized into seven sections. The following section sheds light on social media marketing. Section three shows the development of study hypotheses and model. Section four displays the methodology used in the study. Data analysis and results are illustrated in section five, followed by discussion and conclusion in section six. Finally, implications, limitations and recommendations for future research are clarified in section seven.

Social Media Marketing

Definitions of social media found in the literature, in general, are grounded on two crucial pillars: the Internet and public interaction. Zahoor and Qureshi (2017) defined social media as web technologies utilized to interact with public communities. Interest in social media in the marketing domain has gained increased attention due to the potential effect of these technologies on customer behavior. Additionally, organizations' interest in social media is derived by numerous benefits organizations can achieve such as reducing cost, increasing profitability, sharing knowledge and building business partnerships (Neti, 2011). Hence, researchers have studied social media and social media marketing in different domains such as the impact of social media on customers (Hajli, 2013); effects of social media marketing on online consumer behavior (Vinerean, Cetina, & Tichindelean, 2013); the effect of social media marketing on online shopping (Mohammadpour, Roshandel Arbatani, Hassan Holipour, Farzianpour, & Hosseini, 2014), social media strategies (Bajpai, Pandey and Shriwas, 2012); creative strategies in social media marketing (Ashley & Tuten, 2015); impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty and purchase intention (Balakrishnan, Dahnil, & Yi, 2014); antecedents of social media marketing application (Brech, Messer, Schee, Rauschnabel, & Ivens, 2017); foundations of social media marketing (Constantinides, 2014); effectiveness of social media such as Facebook advertising in enhancing purchase intention (Dehghani & Tumer, 2015); impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty (Erdogmus & Cicek, 2012); antecedents of social media analysis (Guede, Curiel, & Antonovica, 2017); the impact of user interactions in social media on brand awareness and purchase intention (Hutter, Hautz, Dennhardt, & Füller, 2013); corporate reputation and customer behavioral intentions (Keh & Xie, 2008) social media marketing and brand equity (Zahoor & Qureshi, 2017).

Hypotheses and Study Model Development **Antecedents of SMM and SMM**

Recent research on social media marketing (SMM) designated several factors that have vital influences on SMM. In one study on the interaction between universities and fans, Brech et al. (2017) marked out two of these factors: university reputation and frequency of updates. Leung, Bai and Mehmet Erdem (2017) made a reference to the content type of social media. Their study was on the social media marketing of hotels, i.e., Facebook, and found that the most effective types of messages were those related to product, brand and involvement but not those related to reward and promotions. Product involvement and attitude towards the community and interest in online interaction are identified by Dessart (2017) as these factors have an impact on social media engagement. Moreover, Odoom, Anning-Dorson and Acheampong (2017) distinguished two types of social media motivations: product-based and service-oriented. Brink (2017) described open, collaborative business model and distributed leadership as the two

antecedents of SSM. Furthermore, word of mouth communication done using electronic means to promote products or services is called viral marketing via social media (Guede et al., 2017). On the basis of these findings, the first hypothesis of this study was formulated in order to explore the effect of ten social media antecedents on strategic social media marketing:

H1: SMM antecedents significantly affect SMM.

Table 1. Examples of SMM Antecedents Found in the Literature

No.	SMM antecedents	Authors
1	Organization reputation	Brech et al. (2017)
2	Frequency of social media updates	Leung et al. (2017)
3	SMM content type	Leung et al. (2017)
4	Product involvement	
5	Attitude towards community	Dessaert (2017)
6	Interest in online interaction	
7	Social media motivations	Odoom et al. (2017)
8	Open collaborative business model	Brink (2017)
9	Distributed leadership	
10	Brand communication via viral marketing	Guede et al. (2017)

SMM and Brand Loyalty

Ismail (2017) studied the influence of SMM activities on brand loyalty and found that the former has a significant impact on the latter. Erdogmus and Cicek (2012) found a significant impact of social media marketing on brand loyalty, particularly when a brand encompasses popular as well as relevant content publicized on different platforms. Balakrishnan et al. (2014) found a positive impact of SMM on brand loyalty. Rialti, Zollo, Pellegrinie and Ciappei (2017) indicated that the brand loyalty of customers is influenced by their engagement in the social media brand community and brand trust. Bruhn, Schoenmueller and Schäfer (2012) compared the effects of traditional communication media and social media communication on brand awareness and image. Their results showed that a significant impact of traditional media was on brand awareness while a significant impact on social media was on brand image. According to Schultz (2017), brand posts as one of the post characteristics is considered a key advantage of social networks as well as has a positive impact on customer social interaction. Munnukka, Karjaluoto Mahlamäki and Hokkanen (2017) argued that social media engagement has a positive influence on the customer brand experience, which, in turn, affects their brand loyalty. Parganas, Anagnostopoulos and Chadwick (2017) reported similar positive perceptions of the brand among customers as a result of using social networks such as Facebook. Consequently, it was assumed in the second hypothesis of this study that:

H2: SMM significantly affects brand loyalty.

SMM and Purchase Intention

Balakrishnan et al. (2014) investigated the impact of SMM on brand loyalty and purchase intention and indicated that SSM, particularly electronic word of mouth, online communities and online advertisements, has positive effects on brand loyalty and purchase intention. Gautam and Sharma (2017) emphasized that SMM and customer relationships significantly and positively affect customers' purchase intention. Yadav and Rahman (2017) revealed that SMM activities positively affected customer purchase intention as well as brand equity. Sheth and Kim (2017) highlighted that SMM has a significant influence on customer purchase intention. Hutter et al. (2013) demonstrated that SMM using Facebook resulted in positive influences on brand awareness, word of mouth and customer purchase intention. Moreover, investigating the role of Facebook, Dehghani and Tumer (2015) showed that Facebook advertising has significant impacts on both brand image and equity, which, in turn, have a significant impact on customers' purchase intention. According to Ng (2013), a social network community has a significant influence and customer purchase intention is mediated by trust. These results stimulated the hypothesis that:

H3: SMM significantly affects customer purchase intention.

Figure 1 shows a model comprising three hypotheses derived based on the literature reviewed in sections 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3. These hypotheses assumed the effects of social media marketing antecedents – organization's reputation, frequency of social media updates, SMM content type, social media motivations, and open collaborative business model on social media marketing and suggested the effects of SMM on both brand loyalty and customer purchase intention.

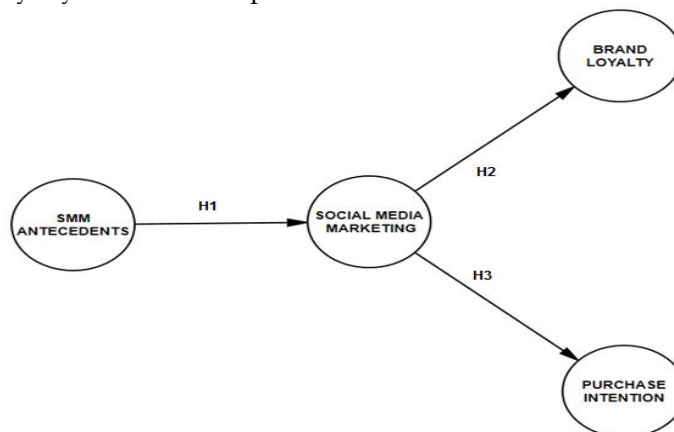


Figure 1. Hypotheses 1-3

SMM Antecedents and Brand Loyalty

SMM antecedents used in this study are: an organization's reputation, frequency of social media updates, SMM content type, social media motivations and brand communications. In general, there is a positive relationship between the reputation of the organization and customer loyalty (Gul, 2014). Liengjindathaworn, Saenchaiyathon and Hawat (2014) found a significant effect of corporate reputation from customers' perceptions on brand loyalty. The results of Caruana and Ewing (2010) suggested a positive effect of corporate reputation on online loyalty. Seo and Park (2017) showed a significant impact of corporate reputation on brand image and brand preference and the latter has a significant impact on brand loyalty. In a meta-analysis study aimed at exploring the antecedents and mediators of brand loyalty conducted by Wu and Anridho (2016), corporate reputation was a significant predictor of brand loyalty. In relation to the frequency of updates, Brech et al. (2017) emphasized the importance of frequent social media updates to ensure customer engagement. According to them, a balanced level of update frequency ensures a good level of customer engagement in social media. Laroche, Habibi and Richard (2013) indicated that customer engagement in social media has an appositive effect on brand trust, which, in turn, has a positive influence on brand loyalty. Secondly, the valuable content of social media was found by Jahn and Kunz (2012) to be a main driver of user engagement. Their results showed that using social media has a positive impact on brand loyalty. Thirdly, Wonly and Mueller (2013) indicated that relevant social media motivations such as brand commitment and involvement motivate users to engage in brand interactions. Finally, Chinomona (2016) indicated that brand communication has a significant impact on brand loyalty in the presence of brand image as a mediating variable in the relationship between brand communication and brand loyalty. In fact, these findings induced that:

H4: SMM antecedents significantly affect brand loyalty.

Figure 2 exhibits a new hypothesis (H4) added to those illustrated in Figure 1. The hypothesis assumed a positive effect of social media antecedents (corporate reputation, social media frequency updates, content of social media, social media's motivations and brand communication) on brand loyalty.

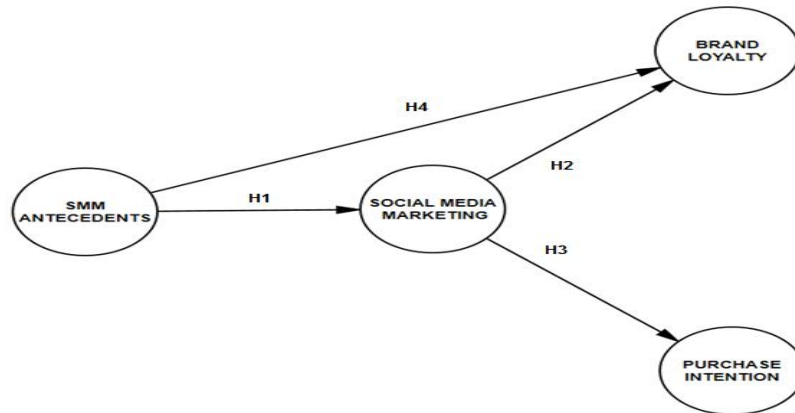


Figure 2. Hypotheses 1-4

SMM Antecedents and Customer Purchase Intention

Corporate reputation as one of the antecedents used in this study has a significant relationship with behavioral intentions of customers with a mediating role played by customer commitment (Keh & Xie, 2008). Lafferty, Goldsmith and Newell (2002) showed that corporate credibility has a significant impact on purchase intention. According to Oztamur and Karakadılar (2014), the frequency of social media updates is positively related to customer engagement in social interactions. Furthermore, electronic word of mouth in social interactions has an impact on purchase intention (See-To & Ho, 2014). With respect to the content type of social media, Hutter et al. (2013) found a non-significant impact of customer annoyance with social media content and purchase intention. Muntinga, Moorman and Smit (2011) indicated that knowing the motivations of customers to use social media can be utilized in order to direct their behaviors, particularly their purchase intention. Finally, Schivinski and Dąbrowski (2013) showed that brand communication has a non-significant influence on customer purchase intention. Based on these results, it was suggested that:

H5: SMM antecedents significantly affect purchase intention.

Figure 3 displays a new hypothesis added to those illustrated in Figure 2. The hypothesis presumed that social media antecedents are significantly related to customer purchase intention.

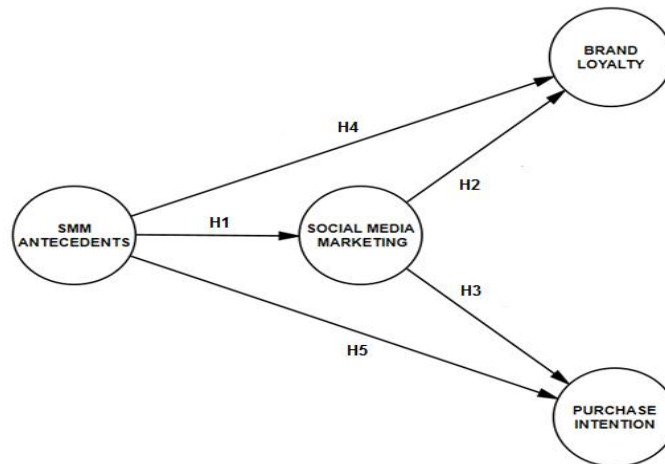


Figure 3. Hypotheses 1-5

Brand Loyalty and Customer Purchase Intention

In a study conducted by Pandey and Srivastava (2016) on the antecedents of customer purchase intention, customer loyalty to a brand was found to be one of the most important drivers of customer purchase intention. Moreover, Chi, Yeh and Yang (2009) found a positive impact of brand loyalty on customer purchase intention. The same finding was echoed in many studies (Calvo-Porrall, Martínez-Fernández, Juanatey-Boga, & Lévy-Mangín, 2015; Chen, Chen, & Lin, 2016; Malik, Ghafour, & Iqbal, 2013; Shahid, Hussain, & aZafar, 2017). Consequently, the following hypothesis was added:

H6: Brand loyalty significantly affects purchase intention.

Figure 4 demonstrates the final model developed in this study, in which a new hypothesis was added (H6) to the previous model portrayed in Figure 3. This consists of six hypotheses: Hypothesis 1 clarifies the effect of SMM antecedents on SMM, Hypothesis 2 postulates that SMM significantly affects brand loyalty, Hypothesis 3 suggests that SMM has a significant effect on purchase intention, Hypothesis 4 presumes that SMM antecedents significantly affect brand loyalty, and Hypothesis 5, on the other hand, assumes that SMM antecedents have a significant effect on purchase intention. Finally, there is a significant effect, according to hypothesis 6, of brand loyalty on purchase intention.

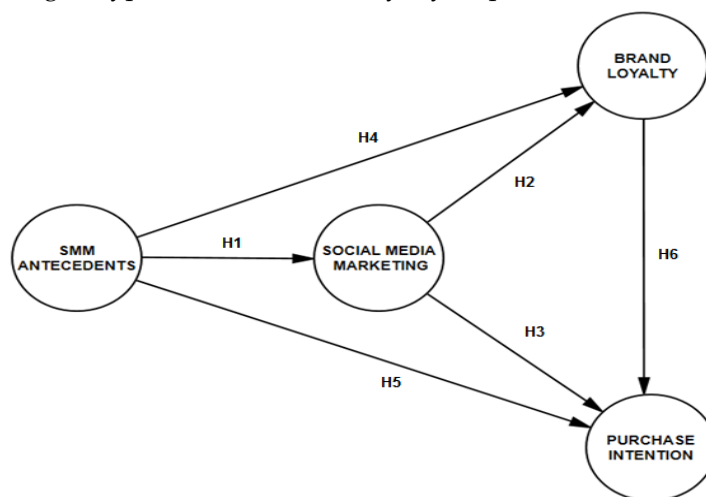


Figure 4. Study model

Study Methodology

Study Sample

A questionnaire was developed and distributed to 500 randomly selected customers from those who visited small appliance shops in three malls of Riyadh. Only 377 questionnaires were returned complete and usable for analysis. The sample size used in this study is considered acceptable based on rules of thumb provided by VanVoorhis and Morgan (2007) since the sample comprised no less than 300 participants.

Measurements

The SMM antecedents used in this study were corporate reputation, social media frequency updates, content of social media, social media motivations and brand communications. Corporate reputation was measured using two items: 'this organization is reputable' adopted from Byrum (2017) and 'this organization is committed to the society' adopted from Calvo-Porrall et al. (2015). In addition, social media frequency updates were measured based on updates, relevance, not too infrequent and not too frequent updates (Brech et al., 2017). The content of social media was evaluated based on the study by Guede et al. (2017) and Leung et al. (2017) using two dimensions related to content understandability and content format such as pictures and colors. Social media motivations were measured by two items related to personal identity and social interaction (Muntinga et al., 2011). Brand communication via viral marketing was assessed based on Guede et al. (2017) by two items 'promoting brand message' and 'co-creation of customer value'. Using three dimensions adopted from Constantinides (2014), social media marketing was measured by application types, social effects and enabling technologies. Furthermore, brand loyalty was measured using three items adopted from Ha, John, Janda and Muthaly (2011) and related to positive word of mouth, continuity of using the same brand regardless of its price and deciding to buy the same brand in case it is available. Finally, two items were adopted from Balakrishnan et al. (2014) to evaluate customer purchase intention (buying intention in the future and repurchase decision).

Data Analysis and Results

Reliability and Validity

The application of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was done on the basis of Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2010). Subsequently, Cronbach's coefficient alpha was used to test the reliability of internal consistency with values no lower than 0.70 along with the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) test with a

recommended value greater than 0.70. Construct validity was evaluated based on convergent and discriminant validity. Therefore, factor loadings were ≥ 0.50 , composite reliability was at least 0.60 and the average variance extracted (AVE) was at least 0.50. This study applies a full application of structural equation modeling, that is, a measurement model is used to explore relationships between indicators used to measure constructs, in addition to a structural model to investigate the directional relationships between constructs (Hoyle, 2000). Glynn and Woodside (2009) indicated that three important measurements should be considered in structural equation modeling: absolute fit, incremental fit and parsimonious fit. The first one can be used to investigate the ability of the overall model, which consists of both the measurement and the structural models, to predict the observed covariance. Moreover, Hoyle (2000) argued that the statistical testing involved in confirmatory factor analysis contains two levels: the overall fit and parameter estimates. In addition to Chi-square/degree of freedom, two absolute fit measures, Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) and Root Mean Square Error of Approx. (RMSEA), were used to investigate the overall fit (Calvo-Porrall et al., 2015; Al-Tit, 2016). According to Glynn and Woodside (2009), the scale of GFI ranges from 0 to 1 where 0 represents a non-fit model and 1 represents a perfect model fit. The results in Table 2 show that factor loadings for antecedents of SMM were greater than 0.50, KMO values were greater than 0.70, AVEs were greater than 0.50 and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were greater than 0.70.

Table 2. Results of Reliability and Validity

Construct	Dimensions	Indicators	Loadings	KMO	AVE	α
Antecedents of SMM	Corporate reputation	ANT1	0.711	0.736	0.648	0.74
	Social media frequency	ANT2	0.689			
	updates	ANT3	0.699			
	Content of social media	ANT4	0.770			
	Social media motivations	ANT5	0.821			
SMM	Brand communications			0.720	0.748	0.75
	Application types	SMM1	0.791			
	Social effects	SMM2	0.674			
	Enabling technologies	SMM3	0.718			
Brand loyalty	Positive word of mouth	BL1	0.881	0.841	0.669	0.81
	Continuity of using the same brand	BL2	0.785			
Purchase intention	Buying intention in the future	PI1	0.812	0.708	0.685	0.84
	Repurchase decision	PI2	0.796			

Model Goodness of Fit Indexes

Table 3 shows that all goodness of fit indexes used met the recommended rules of thumb. According to Huang, Yen and Zhang (2008), a model is regarded as acceptable in terms of the goodness of fit. In this case, the Chi-square/degree of freedom (χ^2/df) is less than 3, GFI is greater than 0.90 and RMSEA is less than 0.05.

Table 3. Results of Model Goodness of Fit Indexes

Index	Criterion	Study model	Result
Chi-square/degree of freedom	< 2.00	1.77	Good
Goodness of Fit Index (GFI)	> 0.90	0.97	Good
Root Mean Square Error of Approx. (RMSEA)	< 0.05	0.031	Good

Results of Hypotheses Testing

The results of path analysis shown in Figure 5 indicate that all hypothesized effects in the study's hypotheses were accepted. There is a statistically significant effect of SMM antecedents on social media marketing ($\beta = 0.27$, $t = 3.56$, $P = 0.000$). Additionally, Hypothesis 2 was accepted since social media marketing has a significant effect on brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.46$, $t = 2.93$, $P = 0.000$). Moreover, social media marketing was found to have a statistically significant effect on customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.30$, $t = 2.67$, $P = 0.000$), which means acceptance of Hypothesis 3. Moreover, the results show that SMM

antecedents significantly affect brand loyalty ($\beta = 0.18$, $t = 3.81$, $P = 0.000$), thereby supporting Hypothesis 4. Furthermore, SMM antecedents significantly affect customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.28$, $t = 1.97$, $P = 0.000$), resulting in Hypothesis 5 being accepted. Finally, brand loyalty has a significant effect on customer purchase intention ($\beta = 0.49$, $t = 4.01$, $P = 0.000$).

Discussion and Conclusion

The six hypotheses proposed in this study were supported. Hypotheses 1, 4 and 5 suggested that social media antecedents as a construct measured using five indicators has a significant effect on social media marketing, brand loyalty and customer purchase intention. Hypotheses 2 and 3 postulated that social media marketing has significant effects on both brand loyalty and customer purchase intention. Hypothesis 6 assumed that brand loyalty has a significant effect on customer purchase intention. Furthermore, concerning the effect of SMM antecedents on social media marketing found in this study, there were similar results that had been revealed in previous studies. Brech et al. (2017) indicated that an organization's reputation and frequency of social media updates as two indicators of social media antecedents positively influence social media marketing. The positive effect of the content type of social media on social media marketing was reported by Leung et al. (2017). Moreover, social media motivations such as product or service-based motivations as well as brand communications have significant impacts on social media marketing (Guede et al., 2017; Odoom et al., 2017). In line with Erdogmus and Cicek (2012), Bruhn et al. (2012), Ismail (2017), Balakrishnan et al. (2014), Rialti et al. (2017), Schultz (2017), Munnukka et al. (2017) and Parganas et al. (2017), the results confirmed that social media marketing has a strong effect on brand loyalty. On the other hand, social media marketing has a significant impact on purchase intention as revealed in numerous prior studies (Balakrishnan et al., 2014; Dehghani & Tumer, 2015; Gautam & Sharma, 2017; Hutter et al., 2013; Sheth & Kim, 2017; Yadav & Rahman, 2017). In agreement with Gul (2014), Liengjindathaworn et al. (2014), Caruana and Ewing (2010), Seo and Park (2017), Wu and Anridho (2016), Brech et al. (2017), Jahn and Kunz (2012), Wonly and Mueller (2013) and Chinomona (2016), it was found that social media antecedents significantly affect brand loyalty.

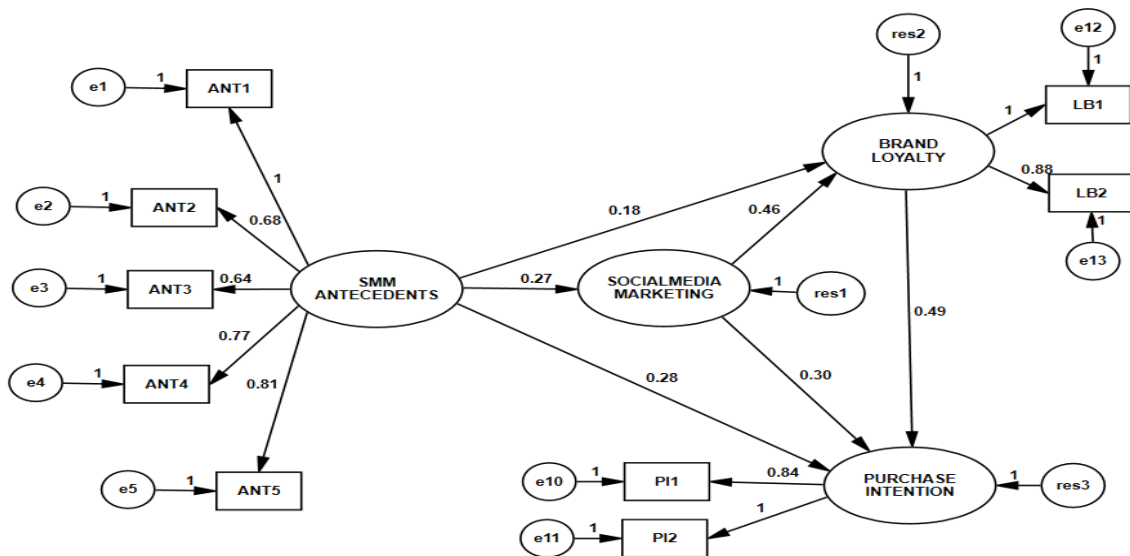


Figure 5. Results of hypotheses testing

The results indicated that social media antecedents have a significant effect on purchase intention. The same result was figured out by Keh and Xie (2008), Lafferty et al. (2002), Oztamur and Karakadilar (2014), See-To and Ho (2014) and Muntinga et al. (2011). Finally, the results showed that brand loyalty significantly affected customer purchase intention (Calvo-Porrall et al., 2015; Chen et al., 2016; Chi et al., 2009; Pandey & Srivastava, 2016; Malik et al., 2013; Al-Tit & Nakhleh; Shahid et al., 2017). For organizations to start an effective application, five antecedents should be considered: corporate reputation, social media frequency updates, content of social media, social media motivations and brand communications. Corporate reputation has increased customer engagement in using social media marketing since reputation results in trust. Ashley and Tuten (2015) highlighted the importance of social media content

and frequent updates. They argued that such content should be fresh, frequently updated and involve incentives that encourage customer engagement. Additionally, a prior step of social media marketing for organizations is to include product and service-based motivations using brand communication means (Brink, 2017; Odoom et al., 2017). Due to the effective role played by social media marketing, it was found to mediate the relationship between social media antecedents and brand loyalty. Moreover, brand loyalty has been defined as an attachment between the customer and the brand (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). The effect of brand loyalty on purchase intention can be explained through levels of brand loyalty itself: behavioral and cognitive loyalty. The first is related to customer behavior and can be described or measured in terms of customer repeated purchase or customer commitment to re-buy the same brand. On the other hand, cognitive loyalty refers to the customers' first preference of the brand (Balakrishnan et al., 2014). An ultimate logical result of brand loyalty is to increase customer purchase intention.

Implications, Limitations and Future Research

Loyal customers who have their own behavior or cognitive reasons to put the brand on the top of their choices, in fact, have key drivers to repurchase the brand. Therefore, one can conclude that brand loyalty results in purchase intent. Based on this result, organizations should first consider customer loyalty to the brand in order to motivate their engagement in social media activities, followed by building loyalty to the brand and repurchase decisions, considering antecedents of social media such as corporate reputation, social media frequency updates, content of social media, social media motivations and brand communications induce three main benefits: enhancing social media marketing, brand loyalty and purchase intention. Social media marketing as measured by application types, social effects and enabling technologies, in turn, will result in improved brand loyalty and purchase intention. Brand loyalty in itself encourages customer purchase intention. A key of this study is related to construct measurement. For example, brand loyalty as a multidimensional construct was measured in this study using two indicators only. Another limitation of the study is that it is a cross-sectional study collected data from customers at one point in time. One of the most important notes is that this study is limited to five antecedents of social media marketing. Therefore, future research should take measurement of such constructs into account to be more sufficient using more indicators and explore the effect of a larger number of antecedents on social media marketing.

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